243 'paddy' to food, prevented the conversion of the food to cash,[1]
[262] though it was quite suitable for village consumption as a supplementary food. In fact, imported white rice has now become an important 'status' food at feasts.

474 Rice continued to be grown for about a year after Rev. Clint's
241 departure; small quantities were sold by the cupful but the income
[242] received would have been negligible. In 1951 the crop was attacked by a species of 'army worm' and on the recommendation of the District Agricultural Officer was destroyed. No further plantings were made and all co-operative agricultural activity lapsed.

By 1952 co-operative agricultural activity had ceased among the Yega. The death of Samuel Ungega (the only man in the co-operative who had any training in co-operative work and the only man capable of directing activities on a long-term basis), removed from the Gombe co-operative the main driving force.

[177] The basic reason for the failure of the Christian co-operative seems to have been that Rev. Clint's aim was to produce a storable food crop whereas the Yega wanted a cash crop. The scheme was established on an inadequate business basis and with insufficient understanding of the people's deep-seated desires.

The modern co-operative and the extent of Yega participation

474 A subsequent co-operative, organized by the Administration and
[241] known as the Gona Villages Native Society Limited, came into being in May 1953. In that month share capital amounting to $2542 was repaid by the Administration to 332 members of the old Gona, Gombe (Iaga) and Garara co-operatives, most of whom immediately became shareholders, at a uniform $10 per share, in the new society. The new co-operative was to serve different purposes from the earlier ventures. There was to be no attempt whatever at communal
[443] production. Functions were to provide marketing facilities for the agricultural produce of individual members and to conduct a retail trading store.

[347] Operations were begun in a store previously owned by A.H. Bunting Ltd on the Popondetta-Killerton Road, half a mile from Cape Killerton. Originally built from local materials and with a tin

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 64]

[659] [1] Only brown unpolished rice is issued as rations to the Administration and plantation labour. The endosperm and much of the vitamin content are removed in the production of white rice, so that employers issuing white rice would have to supply additional vitamins, an uneconomic proposition.

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Gona villages co-operative store. Calculation of shareholders' rebates, December 1962.

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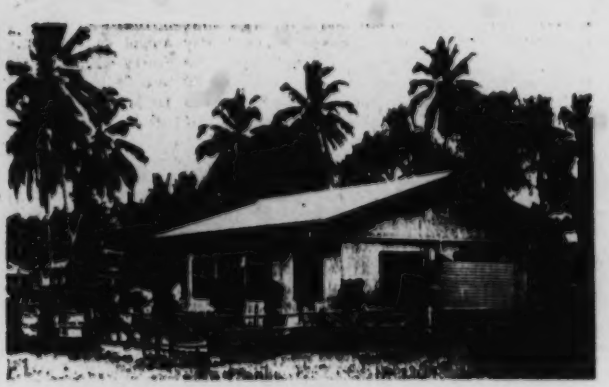

Gona villages co-operative store at Cape Killerton.

roof, the store had to be rebuilt by the co-operative in 1954, on a site adjacent to the original one; it was replaced by a permanent building, constructed on a new site only 100 yards from the wharf at Cape Killerton.

Marketing was of minor importance for the first ten years of the store's operation. Although there were numerous coconut palms in the shareholders' villages, the subsistence demands on them were heavy. Very little copra was offered for sale at the store before 1962 but production increased following a renewed emphasis on the crop by the Department of Agriculture's Extension Service. Copra turnover increased from nil in 1961-2 to $254 in 1962-3 and $1104 in 1963-4. There were at the time of this study few other cash crops in production but labour was an important source of cash.[1]

By contrast the store's retail function was rapidly established. It was for 11 years under the competent control of its first appointed manager, Mr Hankin Kombega, a local Yega man who was also secretary of the society. Within two and a half years from the start of retail trading, a net profit of over $2000 was disbursed to shareholders at the rate of $0.25 for every $2 spent. Only two other rebates were paid - in November 1960 and December 1962; the rebate which would normally have been paid about the end of 1957 or early 1958 was diverted to the construction of the new store. The average rebate paid to shareholders in December 1962 was approximately $3 per head and for Yega shareholders the average was $5.10 per head. Although these amounts may sound small, it should be borne in mind that the share basis was only $10 per head. In addition, the rate of rebate (in 1964, $0.10 per $1) was much higher than that paid by co-operative societies in Australia. The inducement offered by the rebate system did influence Yega purchasers in their choice of a retail store. Of a sample group of eight men questioned, two claimed that all their purchases were made at the co-operative store, four others estimated that over half their purchases were made there, one estimated less than half and one was uncertain.

The Gona Villages Native Society Ltd was managed by a chairman, secretary and board of nine directors, all Papuans, elected by the shareholders. The board met each month and its minutes were sent to the Co-operatives Inspector in Popondetta for approval or veto. If decisions were vetoed, adequate explanation was given.[2]

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[1] See p.65.

[2] An example was the rejection of a board decision to increase the purchase price of copra from 3½ d. to 4 d. per lb. Detailed costs were calculated to show the board that at 4 d. (3 cents) per lb. they would make too small a profit margin.